

Al

I hope most of you have read Al's extensive and impressive obituary in the Buffalo News or attended his memorial service yesterday. His professional and community accolades are truly phenomenal. I cannot do them justice here.

My task today, as I see it, is to tell you all, especially his family, what he meant to his close friends, and his brothers and sisters here at his home parish. Al could have attended church anywhere; gone to where Barbara was serving; sometimes did -and who could blame him? But he told me that he considered St. Peters his home. He loved our Spirit. He felt our prayers for him and was greatly appreciative of them. How blessed we were to have him with us.

I'll start with my personal love for Al, and of course, there's GOLF involved. It was about 23 years ago that I first met Al Price. The Rev. Barbara Price, our new priest here at St. Peters, was talking to me one day and said something to the effect of: *"So I hear you like to play golf!"* *"Why Yes I do"* said I, soon to retire from my teaching career, *"Why do you ask?"*

It turned out that her husband had recently lost his friend and playing partner, **Bunny Jarrett**, to kidney cancer, and was looking for someone else to partner with. We played Willowbrook, and it was evident we both played the game at a comparable skill level. We shot the breeze with a beer and lunch after, and quickly found our common ground.

It turned out that Barbara was doing **ME** a favor. They say that golf reveals character, and so it does. That round was the beginning of a new friendship- forged in golf, and buttressed by mutual respect, humor, social interaction, and a shared Christian Faith. How far did his love for golf go? One only needs to look closely at the urn he picked out for himself to come that realization. I believe that Al and I both shared a deeper love and reliance of the game for our lives- something more spiritual, more primal.

Ed Hill soon came to St. Peters along with Sharon, so Al and I **lured** him into trying the game and he quickly caught the bug as well. My long-time friend Jim Blair would form the final piece of our regular foursome- one that would drive all over Western New York on Tuesdays. Wives- don't schedule anything on Tuesdays!

Later, when Al retired to part-time teaching, He and Ed joined other retired friends of mine on yearly jaunts to Myrtle Beach (golfing Valhalla), along with a 9-hole league at Grover Cleveland. Al and Ed would partner for their two-man team, and Al would now have over 30 new golfing friends to ply his jokes on.

Even the pandemic could not stop us for long, for golf became one of the **safest** activities for the masses, with the possible exception of the ingestion of animal tranquilizers, Clorox, and ultra-violet light. **AND**, in an eerie display of God's grace bestowed upon him, Al began hitting straighter and longer tee shots **AFTER** his round of chemo treatments! He was so happy and encouraged then.

Why do we all gather here today and feel the loss of Al so deeply? In my mind it was because he had a certain bearing about him- a compelling mixture of intellect, humor, meticulousness, and a deep, deep faith in his creator God. As Father Dan said yesterday, Al made room for all his neighbors. **Al was a living paradox.**

He mingled comfortably with the **kingly and the commoner**. Allow me to explain. He was a **Rock Star** in all the professional fields he walked in- Architecture; Urban Planning and community development; higher education; and the governance of the National Episcopal Church. He walked amongst giants and made lifelong friends. He even knew the Presiding Bishop of our Episcopal Church from their youth. Out of respect for Al, his architect friend Ken MacKay re-designed our altar area & oculus- PRO BONO. Non-Latin lovers- that means FREE!

Yet he also mixed in comfortably with the **commoners**-or as I have heard him put it- **JUST PLAIN FOLK**. He humbly shared his **uncommon** aura with his family, his brothers and sisters here at St. Peters, and even strangers. He had a way of raising us all up. He made us all feel seen, felt, and heard. Everyone probably has their own **AL PRICE** memory or story. And if you want to get an insight into Al's class act and character, check out **Al Price's Last Lecture on U-Tube**. Five-star rating.

An important lesson here is that Al wore his deep faith on his sleeve in dealing with both factions- the professional movers and shakers, **and** the commoner. In his own admission, it guided him in everyday life and work.

Al's **intellect** was off the charts. Barbara agreed with me when I suggested he must possess a photographic memory. Al, Ed and I would often drive to golf together, which always became a seminar on current events. (better than golf sometimes) **WE 3** solved all societal ills on a weekly basis, but no one seemed to listen. He regularly read the NY Times and often left articles for Ed and I to read, to prompt future discussions. **Always the teacher**. He often lent his wisdom and intellect to focus us in any church planning sessions- because **THAT** was what he was good at doing in his professional life. Yet he was never intrusive or acted over- important. He led confirmation classes. He trained acolytes. He served us in the capacity of Delegate to Convention. I never heard him say anything uncivil towards anyone. **(OH MY!)**

I mentioned meticulous earlier. Al was all of that. From preparing a 5-star rack of lamb dinner for friends; to his pre-shot routine in golf. From his impeccable casual or formal dresswear, to his expertise as crucifer or acolyte. He **ONLY** played Titleist golf balls with 3 blue dots on them. He had the **BEST** voice- mesmerizing in both the reading of scripture and the singing of hymns. And yet Al could go a little rogue when swinging the Holy Spirit fishing pole around or playing the bongos for a recessional conga line. He always found a way to spread joy around.

**Humor** He belonged to the on-line UB Joke Club, and often forwarded them to me. Did he usually embellish his jokes and take twice as long to tell them- **YES**. But that was his meticulous craft. His quick-wit, self-deprecating humor crossed all genres, all occasions, and all audiences. His humor will be sorely missed. Even in his last days **—"I'm going to get us out of here!"**

That was his specific mission to all of us, especially after his diagnosis: to keep **OUR** spirits up! We all witnessed how he handled his malady.... with extreme grace, dignity, and strength. Al chose to call **OTHERS** when they were struggling with some physical problems. He modeled living the faith for us.

Lois found this in **Forward Day by Day** for May 2, 2023: Wisdom 3:1 **"But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will touch them."** The author that day then talked about a friend of hers: **"The torment of cancer was no match for the strength of her soul, because her soul was in God's hand long before her life on earth ended."** If we simply substitute **HIS** for **HER**, she was also talking about Al Price. **THIS**-on the day of his passing, which was also his mother's birthday. The Holy Spirit at work again.

My sincerest condolences to Barbara, Douglas, and their families. Along with you, this congregation will miss Al dearly. He gifted and touched us all.

SHHH. Close your eyes and listen closely. Do you hear it? Al is telling a joke to St. Peter as they play a round of golf. He's making more friends.